PREFACE TO THE RUFUS / GRATUS TEXT FROM SEBASTE

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E. Jerry Vardaman

The writer is quite aware of the difficulties many of our readers today will have with understanding the following text we now hope to treat. He has thought it proper therefore to stress certain matters about it beforehand that will help readers to appreciate its great value, and understand it better, hopefully.

One of the most problematic areas scholars face in understanding the time that Jesus carried on his ministry is the time of Pontius Pilate. Only two of the procurators that Josephus mentions in his works are described as serving a certain number of years: Gratus (11 years), and Pilate (10 years). In other words it is quite rare for such information to occur in Josephus when he details other actions carried out by all of the other procurators. We also do not know at what point in the career of Gratus, for example, Josephus had in mind when he mentions that Gratus served "11 years". Moreover, Josephus is extremely brief about Gratus' career, describing mainly the names of some high priests whom he appointed to office and mentioning that Gratus rapidly changed one person after the other in this office. Gratus, of course, was Pilate's predecessor.

The importance of the text I treat here comes at this point: we learn that most likely Gratus and Rufus (his predecessor) were in Palestine for at least two decades before the appointment of Pontius Pilate! This means that the "11" years of Gratus could have overlapped in time with the service of his colleague Rufus (and possibly some slight amount of time with Pilate?). Previous to our discovery of this information all scholars assumed that there was only one way to calculate the time in office of Rufus, Gratus, and Pilate: we were to regard them as following one after the other, not having possible overlapping tenures.

I can not be absolutely confident as yet as to the beginning of the exact year that Gratus' service is to be reckoned. I am suspicious that we are to start Gratus' service of 11 years with the year of the removal of Archelaus, and to reckon it in the following fashion:

A.D. 6 --- Archelaus dismissed as Ethnarch; Quirinius (Ant. 18.1ff) arrives to liquidate his estate, appoints (for Judea) Coponius praefect; Gratus serves in adjacent regions

+11 years = no. of years of Gratus in new political / military order (established by Quirinius?)
=A.D. 16-- in this year Gratus replaced by Pilate(?), who arrived slightly earlier(?)

I hasten to admit that a great deal of guesswork is found here; but one must be open to all possibilities when such keen problems are encountered by the insufficient answers we are offered by present students of chronology of the N.T. period. We are told that such is all that we can "know." Are we to remain ignorant or, may we permit ourselves to reexamine the evidence, and possibly experience a chronological breakthrough and arrive at better answers?

Normally a person in the Roman military service, would devote only 20 - 26 years to his career. If Gratus was serving as early as 4B.C., by our identifications in the following study, then it was not the normal procedure for him to serve as late as A.D.26 as demanded by modern systems of chronology. This is another reason that our suggestions in this study need to be given a fair hearing. This date of 4 B.C. is the minimal point from which we are to start Gratus' career in Roman military service, of course. When we first see him in Josephus, he is already in charge of a large military unit, which would demand a lengthy career as a military person before being promoted to that position, say at least 5-7 years? Consider then the likely outline of his career:

About —— 10 B.C. -enlists in Roman military (@ Sebaste?)
About A.D. 16 ---discharged while over Judea (or dimisssed?)
= 26 years, about the average time for military careers.

Did his approaching termination of military service have something to do with his avaricious behavior; was he trying to profit as much as possible while he still had opportunity? Likely so, but we leave that question for others to pursue.

WERE THE SAMARITAN MILITARY LEADERS, RUFUS AND GRATUS AT TIME OF HEROD'S DEATH, THE LATER ROMAN JUDEAN GOVERNORS WHO PRECEDED PONTIUS PILATE?

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From Josephus we learn of two officers of troops in Samaria about the time of the death of Herod I who bear the names of Rufus and Gratus (see references below). Josephus informs us of two later governors of Judea who bear more complete names- Annius Rufus and Valerius Gratus. Does Josephus thereby supply us not only with the nomen of the Samaritan officer "Rufus" (=Annius) but that of the Samaritan officer "Gratus" also (=Valerius)? Are we to connect the names of these officers over troops in Samaria with the same persons as the later Roman governors of Judea who bear the same names: the officer in Samaria with "Rufus" as his cognomen = Annius Rufus; the officer in Samaria with the cognomen of "Gratus" = Valerius Gratus (again, see references below)?

A discovery which might throw some light on the matter relates to an inscription discovered at Sebaste about 22-23 June 1909, by an American team of excavators led by G.A. Reisner[1]:

ΣΤΡΑ]ΤΗΓΟΥΝΤΩΝΑΝΝΙΟΥΡΟ[ΥΦΟΥ
]ΔΕΡΑΝΤΗΚΟΙ

Reisner perceptively suggested that the Samaritan text perhaps referred to Annius Rufus, the later governor of Judea, one of Pilate's predecessors. In extended exchanges which the author has carried on with Nikos Kokkinos[2] , of London England, slight progress has

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[1] "Inscribed architrave block in Basilica, see P1.59c. Lying on layer of debris on the inner edge of the colonnade of the central court, nearly opposite the door leading to the Forum," See Reisner, *Harvard Excavations at Samaria* (Cambridge MA, 1924) 1:250, Greek inscription no.7; cf. 406-407.

[2] Let it be clear that I in no way speak for Kokkinos in any of the conclusions which I reach in this paper; all mistakes, or opinions, are mine only, and we each approach the text from different perspectives.

been made between us on solving a couple of the incomplete or missing words which we note at this time. Kokkinos made the critical identification of the word Ἡρ]ωδείαν in the second line, based on a clear photograph I made of the text at Samaria (showing that an omega stood before the delta). The rest of the text remains obscure and Kokkinos wishes to satisfies himself about matters of epigraphy, and the date of the letters, and especially what scholars believe about the text before he commits himself to an identification of what persons are mentioned in the text. We wish him well in all of his future research on this text.

As for myself, when the word "Herodian" seemed clear as the most likely reading of the second line my reservations about the identifications of the person (or persons?) intended in the inscription were removed and I fixed more resolutely on Rufus, the officer of Sabastene troops as being the same as Rufus, the later governor of Judea. Since, as Kokkinos realized, the verb [Συστρα]τηγούντων (= first word of text) is a plural, the sense of that restoration is: "While Annius Rufus and [blank] were jointly serving as commanders..." Are we to restore Valerius Gratus as the missing officer? I am quite prone to do so, but Kokkinos, in correspondence with me, prefers to wait, until more certainly can be established. Yet, in his excellent, new work, The Herodian Dynasty (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1998), p.164, note 47, he goes so far as to state: "...an identification of Rufus and Gratus with the later homonymous governors of Judea will be suggested elsewhere." Does he see what I have seen for a long time, in Reisner's text, as we might want to call it, that one does not have to depend on it exclusively for suggesting that the identification of Rufus, of the Samaritan military forces, was the same person as Rufus, the later Judean governor; and the same is true for Gratus[3]? The close proximity in time, the geographical agreement, the identity of Rufus' fuller name, and especially the discovery of the word "Herodian" in

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[3] Stein in PIR² (see under "Annius"); Thiersch (see ref. in Stein); E.M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*; I-II. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976. See Index, "Annius Rufus", and others, have followed Reisner for Annius Rufus, at least.

the text seem to clinch conclusively enough the identity of the person in Reisner's text from Sebaste with the "Annius Rufus" of Josephus; the probability is strong that we are to relate this text to Valerius Gratus as well. The case could, thus, be argued from probable identity, that these same connections should be made, even without Reisner's text from Sebaste or the word "Herodian".

My drawings of a suggested restoration of Reisner's text seem to allow the maximum which can be done with our present information about the text. I am gratefully dependent here on Kokkinos' insights, as already noted; I for one would not claim total certainly on any, or all, points of the partial restorations made. I might offer a guess or so about further possible readings but in the nature of the case cannot be extensive in those possibilities here and cannot offer any such with real confidence. We can all hope that missing sections of this long architrave will turn up in the future and could well do so. In any case, the future, it seems, will have to fill out what we are now missing.

Drawing of the text as now preserved:

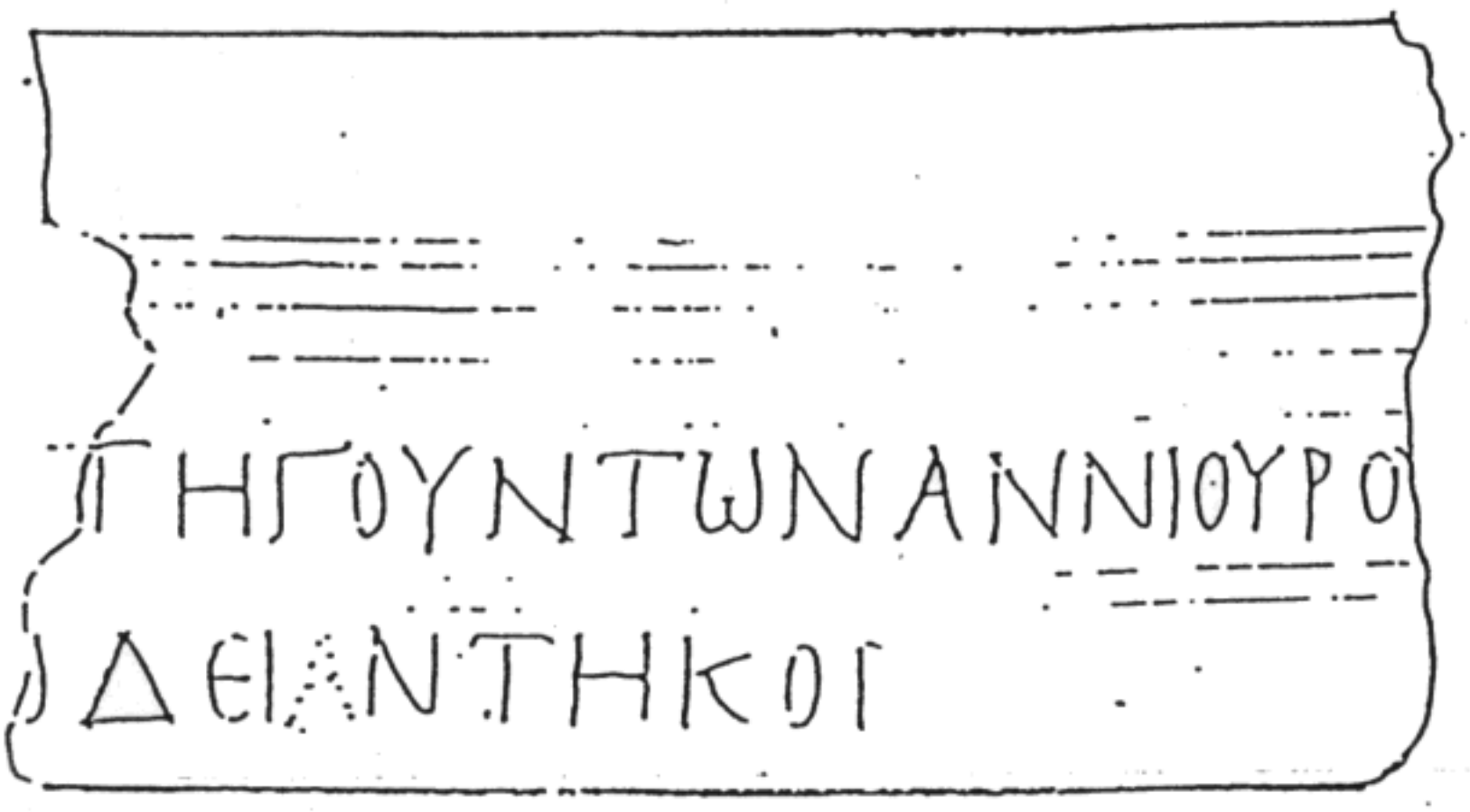

Figure 1. *The Extant Inscription*

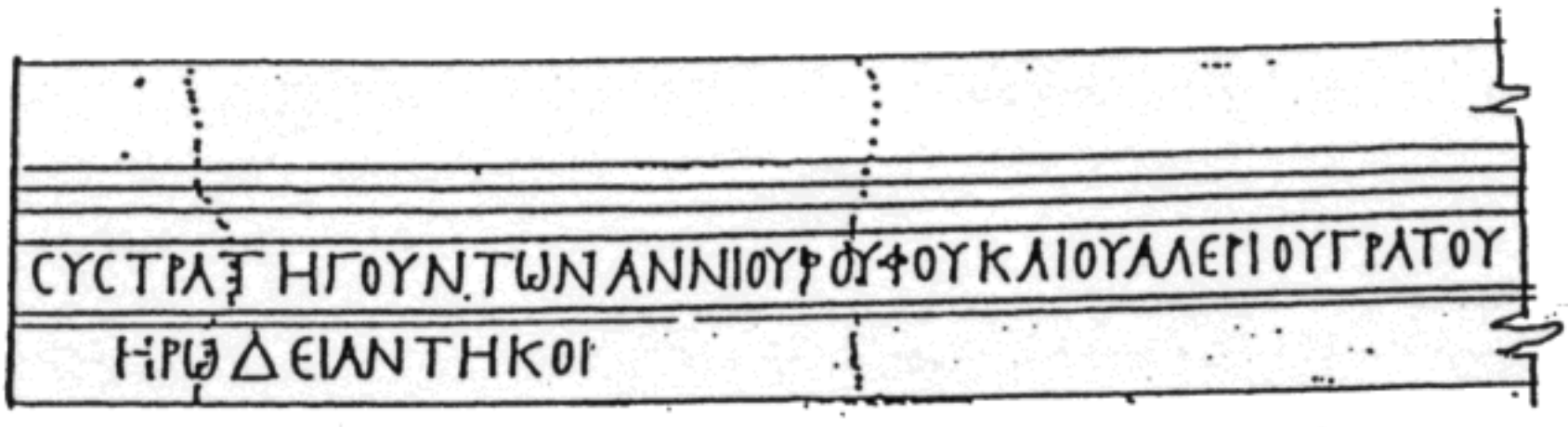

Figure 2. *Suggested Restoration of Inscription*

Provisional translation:

line 1 - "While Annius Rufus and [Valerius Gratus?] were jointly serving as commanders

line 2 - .. .. Herodian..."

It would be most helpful, of course, if one could date this inscription with relative confidence. One is made to inquire, at least, if we could read "TH"and "KOI" (?) as a date: = "Year 308 of Coe[le Syria] ?". On the assumption that the "era of Coele Syria" is the same as the Babylonian Seleucid year that would provide the year 4 B.C. (?) when Josephus tells us that these two officers came to the rescue of Roman forces in Jerusalem (see reff. below). This suggestion has real problems, and at the present time it seems that little more can be said on the restoration of Reisner's text than we venture above. To read "TH" as a date (without an "L," or a horizontal stroke above) is so problematical that I have not entered it into the translation and we can only suggest it as a possibility in the absence of anything better.

The present measurements of the preserved architrave block on which the text is cut are:

Length = 5 ft., 11 in. (at its longest).
Thickness = 2 ft., 1 in.
Height = 2 ft., 4⅛ in.; height of letters = 3⅛ - 4 in.

Until Y. Yadin found more than a dozen texts from Masada which mention King Herod[4], and Testa published one from Herodium which mentioned him[5] as well, texts from Judaea /

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[4] *Masada II; the Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963 - 1965; Final Reports* (Jerusalem; Israel Exploration Society, 1989) nos. 804-16 (pp. 140 -58); cf. no. 826 (pp. 166-67) and one wonders about no. 842(b). Some stone weights mentioning Herod are known from Judea also.

[5] Cf. Emmaneule Testa, *Herodion, I graffiti e gli Ostraka*, Pubblicasoni dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum no. 20.4 (Jerusalem, 1972). A text found in these ostraca simply mentions "Herod" in Hebrew.

Samaria, of Herodian nature, were, strangely, rare. However, this text from Sebaste is quite apparently Herodian and, remarkably, provides us with the largest letters known from any Herodian text (the architrave was doubtless situated in a high position, and the letters had to be large in size in order to be read).

The first lesson we learn from an examination of the following texts in Josephus is that he does not refer to Rufus (nor Gratus?) as a *stratēgos*, as Reisner's text does obviously, for Rufus (and perhaps for Gratus?). Instead of the restoration as *sustratēgountos*, one might prefer to restore *antistratēgountos* (="they were serving as *anti-stratēgoi*"), or to use some other word (epi="at the time they were serving as *stratēgoi*?"). We will not try to exhaust all of the possibilities, and will be frank to admit the tenative nature of *sustratēgountos* as the original reading of the text; nevertheless, this reading seems best, of the possibilities.

Is it possible that Reisner's text related to the office of *stratēgos* of Coele Syria? If one tries to trace the office, at this time one must go back to the early days of Herod I. About 46 B.C. Herod was appointed by Sextus Caesar as *stratēgos* of Coele Syria and Samaria (*War* 1.213: ἐπεὶ δὲ ὑπὸ Σέξτου Καίσαρος καὶ στρατηγὸς ἀνεδείχθη κοίλης Συρίας καὶ Σαμαρείας). Then we note that about 43 B.C. Cassius Longinus, governor of Syria, (*War* 1.225) promoted Herod to the office of procurator (*epimelētēs*) of the whole (?) of Syria. One is made to wonder if here there is not textual confusion? There is some reason to think that Coele Syria might be the right reading here (a scribe confusing Kol in Semitic with Gk., Koilē)? If this is so, Cassius might have only promised that Herod would become ~~king~~ procurator in the future? Here one should cf. *Ant*. 14.280, which states that Herod at this time only possessed the office of *stratēgos* of Coele Syria, with a fleet of ships besides horsemen and foot soldiers. Phasael seems to have served as *stratēgos* also ? For, in 41 B.C. Anthony promoted Herod and his brother Phasael from the offices of *stratēgoi* to *tetrarchs*, causing many protests from the Jews (*Ant*. 14.324-329; cf.*War*.1.244). Shortly thereafter, (37 or 36 B.C. (?)) Cleopatra received Coele Syria (*Ant*. 15.79, 95; Dio 49.32.4-5). Perhaps this was Anthony's way of pleasing these

Jewish protestors, as well as pleasing his wife? This turnover of Samaria took place apparently shortly after Herod's marriage to Mariamme there (see *Ant.*14.467; *War* 1.240).

We know little about the office of *strategos* of Coele Syria under Cleopatra, perhaps because she was in control of the area for only a short time (37-31 B.C.). Was that office the one which was filled by Athenion, when he delivered a surprise attack on Herod's forces at the battle of Cana (hardly Canatha, since Herod did not have control of that area as yet; see *Ant.*15.112ff.cf.116,139 for Athenion; cf. *War* 1.366-375)? We interpret Cana to be the earlier name of Herodium-facing-Arabia, probably in Jordan, at modern "er-Raya", on the border with Nabatea along the Heidan River (Wadi Wala)[6] . The fortress could be so named because of Herod's approximate 40th birthday, at the time?

We lack definiteness as to the existence of the office of *strategos* of Coele Syria / Samaria (in ref. to district and not city, now called Sebaste?) during the time of Herod. Did he retain his older office along with his role over all Syria as *epitropos* (procurator; cf. *War*.1.399)? In all of the military campaigns in which he engaged at this period, no office of *stratēgos* of Coele Syria / Samaria is apparently mentioned as existing under him. It is simply not stated as clearly, in any case, exactly how his former position was organized[7], nor functioned, in Herod's active years.

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[6] Nabatean inscriptions (see "Index" in J. Cantineau, *Le Nabatéen,II*) use the transliterated form of the Greek word for *strategos* to describe their military officers; cf. also "Nakebos " (*Ant.* 16.284; and see *Ant.* 18.112, esp.).

[7] See I. Shatzman, *The Armies of the Hasmonaeans and Herod*; Tübingen: Mohr, 1991, for more light on the organization of Herod's army. We do note that Herod led his army directly until his very last years; see his campaign vs. the Nabateans at Raepta (*Ant.*16.283-284), for example. Cf.G.Allon,"The *strategoi* in the Palestinian Cities during the Roman Epoch,"in his *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World*, trans.I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1977, pp. 458-475. See also, M.H. Gracey, in P. Freeman and D. Kennedy, eds., *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East*, I; "The Armies of the Judean Client Kings". BAR International Series, 297; Oxford: BAR; pp. 311-323.

So, we come back to pick up where we started with this line of discussion. How are we to understand Rufus (and Gratus) as *stratēgoi* of Coele Syria / Samaria (as a district?), if that is indeed the office (or offices?) with which we are here dealing? We do note that both Phasael and Herod at one period occupied those offices, so it is not entirely out of the ordinary to find at least two officers over similar divided positions (one over horses and one over footsoldiers) around the time of Herod's death, or, at least, shortly thereafter, when he no longer controlled such posts? Herod does have *stratēgoi* who serve in other places and capacities (*War* 1.652; 658; 2.8-an officer who served Archelaus, and probably Herod earlier?) but it is not crystal clear that the office of "*stratēgos* of Coele Syria / Samaria" was filled during Herod's active years, after Augustus returned this area to him.

The careful reader will want to know on what basis the restoration of "Valerius Gratus" has been made as the missing person who served jointly as a general (*stratēgos*). I make this identification on the basis of information supplied by Josephus when he describes the outbreak of hostilities following the death of Herod the Great. According to Josephus, 3,000 soldiers from Sebaste proved loyal to Sabinus when he came under attack by Jews in Jerusalem (*Ant.* 17.26; *War* 2.52). The names of the officers in charge of the Sebastene troops (Gratus of the infantry and Rufus of the horsemen / cavalry) seem reasonable now, in light of probabilities, and the inscription from Sebaste, to be no other than the well-known Judaean governors with the same names at later times. A. Schalit[8] seems therefore to be incorrect in assuming the existence of different persons with the names of Rufus and Gratus as far as the generals from Sebaste and the later governors are concerned. I would suggest that the text from Sebaste strengthens an identification of these two generals with the same persons with the same names (Rufus / Gratus) who later became governors of Judaea. Are we enabled to know almost as much about both persons as we do about the more famous Pilate, as a result of this text *from Sebaste*?

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[8] In his very helpful *Namenwörterbuch zu Flavius Josephus* (Leiden, 1968) 11 and 102; 35 and 93.

Literary and Epigraphical References to Rufus

Josephus

1. Rufus is mentioned as leading the cavalry of Herod's Sebastenian troops. See *Ant*. 17.266.
2. Rufus was in charge of the best troops and elite forces of Herod's army. See *Ant*. 17.266.
3. Rufus is often mentioned in association with Gratus, and usually he is mentioned before Gratus (see *War* 2.52; 2.74; *Ant*. 17.266).
4. Gratus is mentioned before Rufus in *Ant*. 17.294, but in the parallel passage in *War*.2.74 Rufus is mentioned first. (Is there textual corruption in *Ant*.17.294?)
5. Just as we note about Gratus (point 2 below), Rufus is also described as being so strong and powerful a personality that he was like a one-man army who was able to turn the tide of battle singlehandedly. See *War* 2.52.
6. He also aided Varus in finally suppressing the remnants of the Jewish forces which revolted at the time of Herod's death, following the time of Sabinus's departure from Judea. See *Ant* 17.294.
7. Like Gratus (see below, point 3) when Herod died (Spring of 4B.C.) he had aided in suppressing the Jewish revolt which arose at that time, bringing his elite cavalry forces from Sebaste for that purpose. All of the above references to Rufus must apparently now be related to that Annius Rufus who later served as procurator of Judea in the light of the text under study from Sebaste.
8. He was appointed to the office of praefect (*Gk. = eparchos*) while Augustus was alive. See *Ant*. 18.32.
9. He was replaced by Tiberius (after August of A.D. 14?), who appointed Gratus as his successor (*Ant*. 18.33).

Epigraphical

Concerning the present text, none of those texts mentioned in J.W. Crowfoot et al., *Objects from Samaria* (London: P.E. F., 1957), all of which bear the name of "Rufus" (no. 36, p.40; no. 38, p.40; no. 47, p.41) have any apparent connection with our Rufus; they do show this name as common at Sebaste.

Literary and Epigraphical References to Gratus

Josephus

1. Gratus was over the infantry of Herod's royal troops (*War* 2.52).
2. He is described by Josephus as being so forceful that as a single person he could turn the tide of battle (*War* 2.52).
3. When Herod I died (Spring of 4 B.C.) a Jewish revolt broke out in Jerusalem which Sabinus sought to suppress (May 4 B.C.). Gratus came from Sebaste with his infantry troops to assist in putting down the uprising (*Ant.* 17.283-84).
4. After Sabinus stole away from Jerusalem out of cowardice, Gratus assisted Varus in further pacifying Judea / Jerusalem (*War* 2.74-75).
5. He subdued one of Simon's brothers. Simon was a former slave of Herod who had revolted after Herod's death (see *Ant.* 17.284; *War* 2.64).
6. While Gratus led his infantry and elite archers from Trachonitis, as well as the finest troops of the Sebastenians, he engaged Simon, with his Pereans, in battle, and defeated him. He then pursued Simon, who was attempting to escape up a steep ravine. Gratus struck him on the neck and cut off Simon's head (see *War* 2.57-59; *Ant.* 17.275-76).
7. He further distinguished himself in a battle which took place near Emmaus by rescuing a Roman detachment which was attacked there by insurgents of Athrongaeus (*War* 2. 60-63; *Ant.* 17. 273-83). All of the above references to "Gratus" whom we have previously been unable to identify fully, seem to be related to Valerius Gratus, of whom Josephus supplies the following information as well.

8. Valerius Gratus was the successor of Rufus. He came to the office of praefect of Judea while Tiberius ruled (*Ant.* 18.33).
9. Gratus in short order deposed Annas from the office of high priest; he appointed Ishmael, son of Phiabi, as his successor; soon he replaced Ishmael with Eleazar (we identify this person with Alexander in Acts 4:6); soon he replaced Eleazar with Simon son of Camith; in short order Simon was replaced by Joseph called Caiaphas (*Ant.* 18.34,35). Did Gratus, or Pilate, or Antipas appoint Caiaphas?
10. After "eleven years" he retired to Rome (?) and was succeeded by Pilate (*Ant.* 18.35). Eisler (see below) suggested that Gratus served four years; we suggest he might have served even less as governor; or even longer (if we calculate by combining the time in his various offices) in Roman Judea / Samaria / Jamnia(?), depending on how all of his service is to be reckoned . See below.

Jerome and Rabbinic Tradition

Here the reader is referred to R. Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist*, trans. A. H. Krappe (London: Methuen & Co., 1931) 18-19. Jerome stated in his *Commentary on Matthew* that Caiaphas bought the office of high priest from Herod Antipas, according to his copy of Josephus. Eisler related this to the Rabbinic tradition according to which the term of high priests came to be limited to one year by Gratus. See especially Eisler here, 18,n.3; Eisler called attention also to the reading in the Romanian Josephus which stated that Gratus was recalled for taking a bribe from Ishmael (cf. John 11.49— Caiaphas was high priest *that year*).

Epigraphical

Besides the text we are now seeking to understand, M. Avi-Yonah noticed a possible reference which might go back to our Gratus. One should consult Avi-Yonah's "Newly Discovered Latin and Greek Inscriptions," *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine* 12 (1946): 84-102, esp. inscription no. 1,pp. 84-85. The document refers to a Julia Grata, who was apparently a

daughter of a certain procurator named Mellon (?) who had been freed from slavery by the Emperor Tiberius. The text was written while the Emperor Tiberius was still alive apparently. Avi-Yonah suggested that Julia Grata's name could have come about by some relationship of the family with Valerius Gratus, and certainly the date of the text and its location do not argue against that possibility. The text came from Jamnia, which was part of that territory willed by Salome to Livia, who had her procurators over this area: see Josephus (*Ant.* 17.189; *War* 2.167; *Ant.* 18.31; *Ant.* 18.158-59). Following is the text of Avi-Yonah with its restoration and translation:

IVLIA > GRATA	Julia Grata	"Julia Grata,
TI > IVLII> AVG>L>	Tiberii Julii Aug(usti) l(iberti)	daughter of Mellon,
MELLONTIS > PROC>	Mellontis proc (uratoris) (filia)	Procurator,Freedman of Tiberius Julius Augustus."

One asks if Gratus also could have served around Jamnia before, or after his service as Judean governor? The text presumes a time after Livia's death when her possessions had been taken over by the Emperor Tiberius himself. It would date A.D. 29 - 37? We should note that Tiberius was a Claudian; but he had been adopted by Augustus as son, which could possibly explain the language?

A final implication which impresses itself on our understanding of the text needs to be shared here. One of the most complex periods in New Testament chronology, and classical history as well, relates to the early life of Jesus. Here we mean not only the time of his birth, but also the approximate time he started his ministry as well. If we have grasped only one of the lessons to be gained through a study of Reisner's overlooked Sebaste inscription, it seems to teach us clearly that Rufus, and probably Gratus, were familiar faces to regions around Roman period Judea long before their specific service as governors.

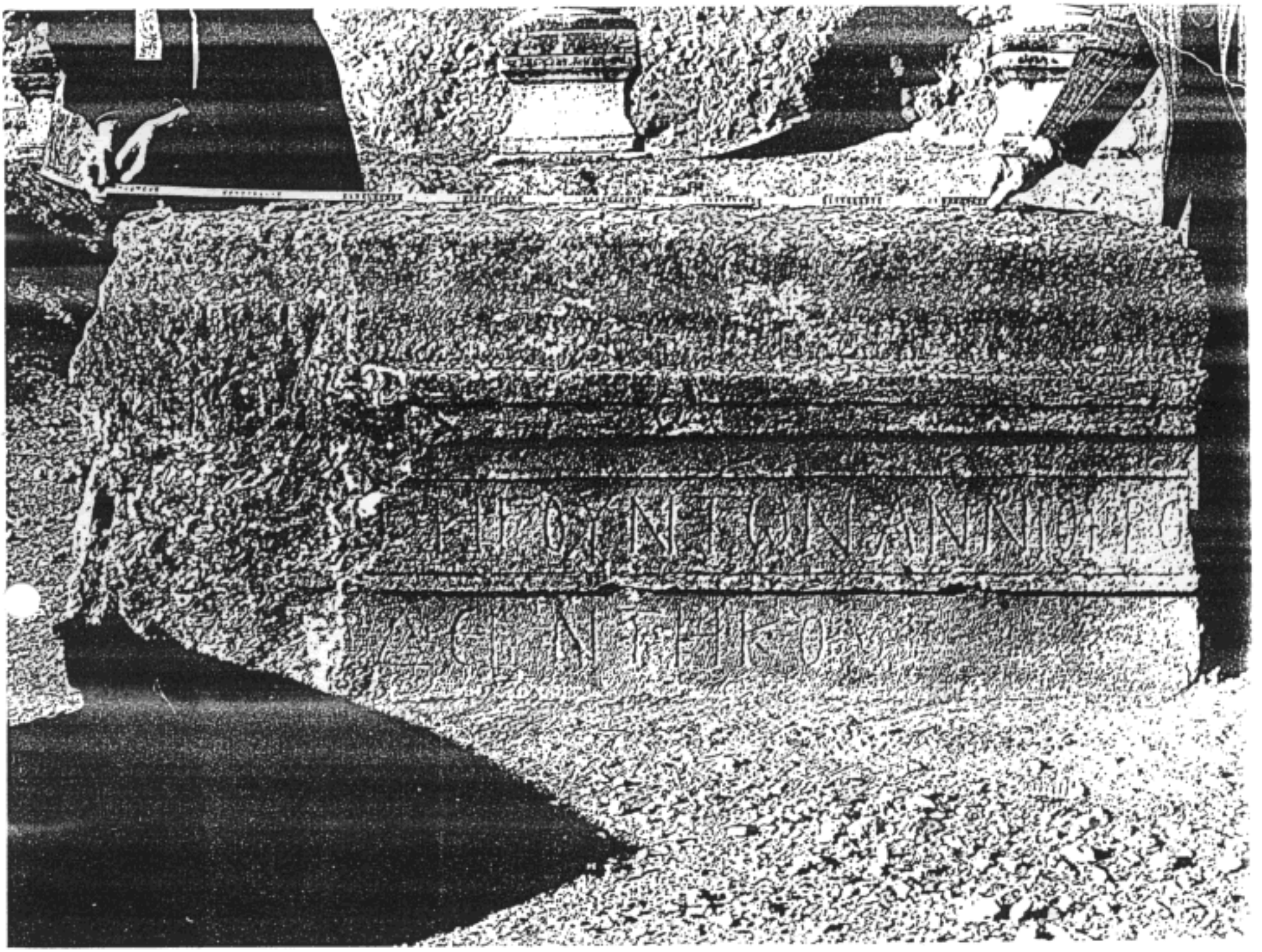
Has our failure to understand that Rufus / Gratus of Sebaste are the later prefects resulted in our misunderstanding of other things

Josephus has to say about them? Probably so. But when we have realized, in particular, that their political / military careers overlapped and began in the region earlier than we previously suspected, we are forced to look again at the entire chronological order of their careers which traditionally we have followed, and to attempt to reassess the chronology. The service of Rufus / Gratus likely overlapped in some degree in the latter parts of their careers as well as at the first? When are we to begin the "11 years" of Gratus as governor in regions of Roman Judea? Are we sure that that figure relates to his service in Judea exclusively? Philo says that H. Capito was procurator of Judea, when his service, as far as we know, related to the area around Jamnia exclusively (*Embassy to Gaius* XXIX. 199). In this same approximate period of time, could Josephus, who was not as close in time to the particular events and people here discussed as Philo was, have made some statements about Rufus or Gratus that need clarification if we modern students are to understand him correctly? We suggest that this is likely the case. We have a situation closely similar to this in the confused chronology of Felix and Cumanus and their respective areas of service in Roman period Judea, but space does not permit us to deal with that matter extensively here[9].

Cumanus, according to Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.34), served primarily in Galilee. Felix was over Samaria, and possibly Judea also. After Cumanus' dismissal, Felix served thereafter solely? It is possible, similiarly, that for a period Rufus and Gratus ruled as governors at the same time but in separate areas; when Rufus was removed from office, Gratus continued to serve, likely in a larger, or sole capacity, as governor. Our guess is that Rufus earlier was in charge of Judea / Samaria; Gratus was over who knows where: Galilee? or Jamnia? or Idumea? or, Peraea? When Rufus departed shortly after the time of Augustus' death, then Gratus' control transferred to Rufus' former district. He severely abused his power by selling repeatedly the office of high priesthood to the highest bidders (until Gratus' dismissal, as well, after mid-AD 15, or somewhat later?). The title of ἡγεμών Gratus already had before he filled Rufus'post (with political and military powers? See *War* 2.58; cf. *Ant.* 18.33-35)

[9] One should cf. Schiirer, I, pp 459 ff. for Cumanus / Felix.

PHOTO OF THE RUFUS (GRATUS?) TEXT FROM SEBASTE



It is very difficult to know why the present form of this text is incomplete. As one looks at the text, the top left rear corner (where two hand are shown) is badly preserved and barely hanging on to the block. One is made to wonder if this fault in the stone was discovered late in the manufacturing process of the inscription, and work on it was discontinued. On the other hand, one could argue that the text was at one time complet and erasures or weathering could have caused the text to be incomplete at present? The weathering explanation leaves too much unexplained however.

June 22, 1998

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE DISMISSAL OF PONTIUS PILATE AS PRAEFECT OF JUDEA

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JOSEPHUS' REFERENCES TO JESUS AND PILATE

Since Pilate was the Roman praefect under whom Jesus was crucified, his tenure in this office overlapped with the time of Jesus' ministry. If we can discover the exact time that he served in office in Judea, therefore, this information could be of great help in determining the time of Jesus' ministry. It is for that purpose that we attempt to study the chronology of Pilate's service as Roman governor of Judea.

Josephus refers to Jesus in Antiquities 18:63-64, mentioning that Jesus was wise, won over many Jews and Greeks, was crucified by Pilate; however, his followers testified that he rose from the dead, and the tribe of Christians had not died out, even in the last years of the first century A.D., when Josephus wrote. The authenticity of this passage is disputed by many, but I believe that Josephus is referring to the biblical Jesus. Granted, some of Josephus's statements could have been expanded by Christian scribes, but the core of what is reported about Jesus by Josephus is fully authentic and Josephus's testimony is located at the right place historically.

Unnoticed by most students of Josephus is the fact that Josephus places Jesus in a time frame for beginning his ministry *no later than* A.D. 15-19 (and possibly slightly earlier).

It is true that Josephus is not always arranged chronologically. Nevertheless, it is just as true, demonstrably, that Josephus is *sometimes*, and quite often, chronological in his arrangement of material - certainly in his general arrangement of material. For example, Moses is not reported in the later part of his *Antiquities*, but in the earlier part. In Josephus's account of Jesus, it is strange that Pilate and Jesus would be dated to the approximate times that they were (A.D. 15-19) unless that is indeed when Jesus and Pilate were carrying on their activities. Note the context of historical events in which Jesus and Pilate are mentioned:

1. Parthians request, then reject, Vonones (*Antiquities 18:46ff.*) = A.D. 14-17
2. Silanus removed and Piso becomes governor of Syria (*Antiquities 18:52, 54*) = A.D. 17
3. Orodes rules in Armenia (*Antiquities 18:52*) = A.D. 15-18
4. Antiochus of Commagene dies (*Antiquities 18.53*) = A.D. 17; Josephus mentions just before Pilate takes standards with images of Tiberius into Jerusalem.
5. Germanicus sent to East; poisoned by Piso (?) (*Antiquities 18:54*) = A.D. 17-19
6. Josephus's reference to Jesus (*Antiquities 18:63-64*)
7. Mundus seduces Paulina; Tiberius overthrows Isis cult (*Antiquities 18:65ff.*) = A.D. 19
8. Fulvia cheated; Tiberius expels Jews from Rome (*Antiquities 18:81-83*) = A.D. 19

Thus, Josephus turns out to be even more important in his testimony to Jesus' ministry when one recognizes that this event is placed within a historical context involving both Pilate and Jesus, in historical contexts dating around A.D. 15-19. And it is not possible to remove the passage as inauthentic and to solve the problem of this mention of Jesus in this early setting by that denial. Josephus just as certainly places

Pilate, who crucified Jesus, in this same "early" historical context, even if one denies the value of Josephus's testimony to Jesus (see *Antiquities 18:55-62*).

If one accepts the historical value of Josephus's testimony to Jesus and to Pilate, and the time frame in which these testimonies occur, then one is at once presented with a problem in the chronology that dates the death of Jesus around A.D. 30-33. On the other hand, it would be natural for Jesus to be involved in his public ministry around A.D. 15-19 if he were born, as I believe, around the fall of 12 B.C. Thus, in the fall of A.D. 15, for example, Jesus would have been *arriving* at the thirty years of age, just as Luke 3:23 mentions: "And Jesus was starting to be about thirty years of age."

DOES PILATE DATE A.D. 15-25 OR A.D. 26-36?

Problems of chronology relating to Pontius Pilate, of course, are quite complex. The majority of New Testament and classical scholars date Pilate's rule as procurator / prefect of Judea between A.D. 26 and 36[10]. My contention is that the case for this traditional date of Pontius Pilate is not as airtight as its defenders believe, and that more and more scholars will reject this older chronology of Pilate for a better system as they study the problem more carefully. Daniel Schwartz of the history department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has already arrived at an earlier date for the start of Pilate's career (A.D. 14/15), although he leaves Pilate in office as late as A.D. 37.[11] I would end Pilate's career earlier than Schwartz. It must be stressed that the year of Pilate's dismissal is not as critical as the date of the beginning of his career.

If Jesus started his career as early as A.D.14, as I have argued above, Pilate had to appear on the scene in Judea no later than A.D. 21, the time of Jesus 'death. Of course, other New Testament references to Pilate must be accomodated by an earlier chronology than A.D. 21.[12] I believe that the evidence for Pilate's service in Judea prior to A.D.21 is sufficiently strong to demonstrate that he could indeed have put Jesus to death as early as A.D. 21. I feel, moreover, that Pilate was dismissed from his post in Judea by A.D. 25/26 but will not insist on the date for his dismissal as strongly as the beginning of his service.

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[10] E.g., Schurer, History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, 1:383

[11] D. Schwartz, "The Appointment of Pontius Pilate and the Chronology of *Antiquities of the Jews, Books 18-20," Zion 48 (1983) 325-45*[Hebrew]. I would agree with Schwartz's early date for Pilate, although I am not indebted to him for this early date, having arrived in my position earlier and holding an earlier date than he does. See pp.342ff. for Schwartz's views on the beginning of Pilate's career (A.D. 18/19) and final year (A.D. 37). See also D. Schwartz, "Josephus and Philo on Pontius Pilate," Jerusalem Cathedra (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1983), 3:26-45. Readers should esp. cf. of his new "Pontius Pilate," in Anchor Bible Dictionary , Vol. 5,pp. 395-401, where his chronology remains essentially the same, with only minor revisions. Schwartz confesses great dependence on Eisler, which I do not have. I start both Pilate and Jesus earlier than Eisler though my date for Jesus' death is close to Eisler's.

[12] Since I accept Luke 3:1 as referring to Tiberius's second year (=A.D. 15), I necessarily would date Pilate no later than that year, since he is related in the same verse to the same year that John the Baptist starts his ministry. As seen in the Rufus / Gratus study, Pilate's career seemingly overlapped with Gratus; did he fill Rufus' shoes when he was relieved of duty, thus serving alongside of Gratus for some while. Significantly many scholars question whether the New Testament writers or Josephus (in *Antiquities 18-20*) concerned themselves with chronology in the presentation of their materials. My contention is that a recognizable chronology, though loose in places due to material sometimes being presented topically, is generally suggested.

TIBERIUS' "MOVE" TO CAPRI IN A.D. 26 AND PILATE'S DISMISSAL:

It seems possible that Pilate was dismissed about the time that Tiberius moved from Rome to the island of Capri. Pilate could have been dismissed even a few months before Tiberius's transfer to his island retreat, to which occasionally Tiberius had already taken himself, at least as early as A.D. 21. After A.D. 26, Tiberius took up permanent residence at Capri, and visited the Italian mainland rarely after that date. When Josephus describes Pilate's dismissal in *Antiquities 18:89* he states that before Pilate could get to Rome, Tiberius had already μεταστάς, (translated 'died' or 'passed away' by modern translators; I take the idea to mean that before Pilate got to Italy Tiberius had already *moved* to Capri). The natural place for Pilate to be sent, if he were dismissed as late as A.D. 36 or 37, as most scholars assert, was not to Rome but to Capri, since that was Tiberius' main residence by that time. Quite often μετατίθημι bears the meaning of 'moved'. In approximately one-half of the usages in Josephus and the New Testament μετατίθημι has the meaning of 'moved'; thus,'moved' is not a rare meaning and should be so understood in *Antiquities 18:89*.[13]

On the other hand, real problems arise if one translates μεταστάς as 'died' in this passage. For one thing, Tiberius did not die in Rome but in Misenum (Tacitus, *Annals 6:50*). Moreover, 'moved' as the sense of μεταστάς, seems more natural since Josephus lists numerous actions in *Antiquities 18* of Tiberius after his "death," if that is the way the word is to be understood:

18:96	Writes Vitellius
18:97	Intrigues with friends to make war against Artabanus
18:101	Seeks treaty with Artabanus
18:103	Receives Darius, Artabanus's son, as hostage
18:104	Receives report from Antipas about victory over Artabanus
18:105	Receives similar report from Vitellius and replies to him
18:108	Annexes territory of Herod Philip to Syria (A.D. 33/34)
18:115	Receives report from Herod Antipas; orders Vitellius against Aretas IV

TIBERIUS' DEATH AROUND A.D. 37

Some of these actions are clearly earlier than A.D. 37, the supposed date of Pilate's dismissal. For example, Philip's death is clearly stated to have been in the twentieth year of Tiberius (=A.D. 33/34). Since Pilate's dismissal is recorded at an earlier point in Josephus (*Antiquities 18:89*) than Philip's death (*Antiquities 18:108*) one could just as well argue that Pilate was dismissed earlier that Philip's death, which I believe to be the case. If Pilate was dismissed in A.D. 25/26 or thereabouts, it would be natural to record Philip's death at a later point in Josephus's account, and this is exactly what one finds. Finally, Josephus relates the death of Tiberius at much later point, so that one can be sure that Josephus is not relating the death of Tiberius in *Antiquities 18:89*:

18:124	Tiberius died while Vitellius on way to Nabatea
18:179	Tiberius visited briefly at Tusculum, 12 miles from Rome
18:205	Tiberius returned to Capri and sickened
18:225	Full account of Tiberius's death; power transferred to Gaius

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[13] Dio Cassius uses the same word to describe Tiberius' move to Capri in A.D. 26; see his Roman History 57.12.6. In half of the usages in the N.T., when this word is used, the word means "move"; in the other half, the word means "die". The same is true for Josephus.

Be all of this as it may, many clues point to Pilate assuming the office of governor of Judea well before A.D. 26. Not only does Josephus place Jesus within a historical context of A.D. 14-19 (see the early part of my study and *Antiquities 18:43-86*), but Pilate is placed by Josephus within this same period of time. Josephus clearly states that Jesus was put to death by Pilate, and lists various activities of Pilate in Judea and Samaria before he mentions Pilate's crucifixion of Jesus. Josephus mentions that Pilate was appointed before Tiberias was built (*Antiquities 18:36; cf. Jewish War 2:168*, where he mentions Tiberias's construction just before Pilate's appointment).[14]

Enough information presents itself, however, to question that Pilate was dismissed as late as A.D. 36/37. If Pilate served as early as A.D.14/15, then Josephus's statement that he served ten years also demands careful study (*Antiquities 18:89; cf. 18:177*). If Pilate began his governor ship as early as A.D. 14/15, a date for his dismissal around A.D. 25/26 well accords with a ten-year term related by Josephus. This date for the removal of Pilate agrees with the time of Paul's conversion, and in the absence of Pilate from the scene, the high priest used the occasion of a power vacuum to dispatch Paul to arrest the Christians of Damascus, and bring them bound to Jerusalem (Acts 9:2ff., 22:5ff., 26:10ff.; cf.Gal 1:13).

FRAGMENTARY KNOWLEDGE OF ROMAN GOVERNORS OF SYRIA

Unfortunately, great gaps exist in our knowledge of the Roman governors of Syria in the first century B.C., such as Quirinius's career, as well as in the first century A.D., such as the full careers of Flaccus and L. Vitellius. We are likewise ignorant of much of the careers of their military associates. If more knowledge of all these backgrounds were made available, some misunderstandings of Josephus's statements would disappear. Even though Josephus mentions the successor of Pilate, for example, one still is puzzled to know whether his name was Marullus (*Antiquities 18:237*) or Marcellus (*Antiquities 18:89*), or whether both individuals served separate terms[15]. To me it seems better to confess considerable ignorance of matters relating to Vitellius's dismissal of Pilate, as well, in the light of many uncertainties about this event.

When one firmly places Jesus within a historical context of A.D.15-21, certain statements of the New Testament harmonize beautifully with known events of that period. For example, John the Baptist admonished the soldiers who heard him to be "content with your wages"(Luke 3:14). To me, John the Baptist's words can only be understood within the context of the mutinies and uprisings of Roman troops at that time (after the death of Angustus and the following months). In late A.D.14 and the following months of A.D.15, Roman troops in Pannonia and lower Germany mutinied due to their low rewards and the dangers to which they were exposed at the time. Moreover, Augustus in his will gave greater rewards to the praetorians (consisting of Germans and Gauls) than to his own loyal troops. Roman troops resented their long years of service, and the poor rewards they received when their service terminated. This situation reached such a tense state of affairs that Germanicus had to make concessions to his troops in Germany, which Tiberius,

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[14] For the foundation of Tiberias, see M. Avi-Yonah, "The Foundation of Tiberias,"IEJ 1 (1950/51) 160-69; A. Spijkerman, "Some Rare Jewish Coins," *Liber Annus* 13 (1963) 298ff. If Spijkerman is correct, Tiberias was founded no later than A.D. 20, with A.D. 17 being possible.

[15] See the literature on this question gathered by L.H. Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984) 320-23, nos. 1416-29d.

in the give and take of later Roman politics, withdrew. All of this activity, which is unparalleled at other times in the first half of the first century A.D., doubtless spilled over beyond Germany and Pannonia, and made its own impact on Roman troops stationed elsewhere, including the regions around Judea at this time (see Tacitus, *Annals* 1:16f., 1:31ff.) This background affords the perfect time for John the Baptist's words to soldiers who listened to him to be peaceable, fair, and content with their wages. Interestingly, John Malalas (10:236) dates the death of John the Baptist in A.D.17, during the consulship of Flaccus and Rufus, even though in the same context he had just dated his work as beginning in the consulship of Silanus and Nerva (=A.D.28)!

MICROLETTERS AND PILATE

Here we introduce another evidence from microletters which tends to strengthen our dates for Pilate's time in office (A.D. 15-25):

On a Jewish shekel of "year one" (i.e., the first year of the First Revolt of the Jews against the Romans, A.D. 66) in the British Musecum (No. PS139375), I see mention of the consul M. Vettius Bolanus, who was only in office September 25 to November 23, A.D.66 (E. Marry Smallwood, Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero[Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976], p.6), which confirms the date of this coin within those two months of the year 66. On the coin I also find the information that Pontius Pilate was dismissed from his office as procurator of Judea forty-two years prior to the striking of this coin. This would put Pilate's dismissal late in the year A.D. 25 or possibly early in A.D.26, and therefore his first year in office was A.D. 15/16. To accord with this date for the dismissal of Pilate the statement in Josephus (Ant.18.98) usually translated to say that Pilate , when dismissed, reached Rome after Tiberius had passed away (μετασταῖς), which was on March 16, A.D. 37, may equally well be translated to say that Pilate reached Rome after Tiberius "moved" to Capri, which he did in A.D.26, for the verb μετατίθημι basically means to transfer to another place.

I now quote from J. Finegan's Archaeology of the New Testament; Life of Jesus and the Beginning of the Early Church, Rev. Ed. Princeton: Univ. Press, 1992, p.xxiv, note 3:

Obviously if the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate was in A.D. 15/16-25/26 changes must also be made in hitherto generally accepted dates for other procurators. Pilate's four predecessors and the dates hitherto usually given are (1) Coponius, A.D. 6-9; (2) Marcus Ambibulus, 9-12; (3) Annius Rufus, 12-15; and (4) Valerius Gratus, 15-26 (SHJP Vermes/Millar, I, p. 382 and n. 130, with acknowledgement that the first three cannot be precisely dated). Vardaman (telephone, April 30, 1990) finds on the Jewish shekel of "year one" (A.D. 66) that this year was the fifty-eighth year since the appointment of Annius Rufus, therefore Rufus must have taken office say in midyear A.D. 9, and the successive terms of Coponius and Ambibulus must together have fallen in A.D. 6-9. Josephus (Ant.18.32) states that the administration of Annius Rufus was marked by the death of Angustus (August 19, A.D. 14), so Rufus' procuratorship continued into the year 14/15. Between the latter date and the first year of Pilate in A.D. 15 there is only one year for Valerius Gratus, namely 14/15. The statement of Josephus (Ant. 18.35) that Gratus was in office eleven years was already reduced by Eisler (op. cit., p.17) to four years on the supposition of an incorrect change of an original Greek character delta (Δ) for the numeral "four" into IA) or "eleven" (iota = 10, alpha = 1), whereas Vardaman supposes

that it was an original alpha (= 1) that was misread. Vardaman's reconstructed dates of the procurators through Pilate are, therefore, according to the foregoing: (1) Coponius, A.D. 6/7; (2) Marcus Ambibulus, 7-9; (3) Annius Rufus, 9-14; (4) Valerius Gratus, 14/15; and (5) Marcus Pontius Pilate, 15/16-25/26.

See also Finegan, Ibid, pp.xxvf. note 5 (Finegan has done an excellent job in starting my position on Pilate so accurately, and with minimum of words, that I let him set forth by basic positions here, with understandable slight variations in the dates of the procurators / praefects, which I still attempt to determine exactly):

Chronologically of the greatest importance along with the information on the "year one" Jewish shekel providing the A.D. 15/16 date of the first year of Pontius Pilate (see above note 3) is the reported discovery of microletters on the rim of the same shekel that read precisely: "Year 6 of the procurator Mar(cus) Pontius Pilate, which is (ὁ καί)Year 1 (LA, i.e., the sign for "year" and alpha, the character for the numeral one) of the death (σταυροῦ , the cross, the crucifixion) of Jesus, the righteous one." On this basis the six years of Pilate and the date of the death of Jesus may be tabulated as follows:

Year One = June A.D. 15 – June A.D. 16

Year Two = June A.D. 16 – June A.D. 17

Year Three = June A.D. 17 – June A.D. 18

Year Four = June A.D. 18 – June A.D. 19

Year Five = June A.D. 19 – June A.D. 20

Year Six = June A.D. 20 – June A.D. 21 † Jesus dies at Passover in April A.D. 21, while Pontius Pilate is in his sixth year in office [Vardaman letter, April 20, 1990]

Also reported are microletters on a coin struck by Flaccus as governor of Syria in A.D. 26 that indicate this as the sixth year dating from the death of Jesus (Vardaman in CKC p. 60, fig. 1 and letter, March 23, 1990)

Thus, while much uncertainty still hovers around the exact years that the praefects Coponius, Ambibulus, Rufus and Gratus served during the years A.D. 6-15,

and while we can not as yet determine exactly what specific areas of the province of Judaea each ruled (we allow overlapping, synchronous time here and there, still difficult to determine precisely), the outline of Pilate's time in office becomes more clear with continuing research, and we still cleave provisionally to the basic, approximate time of A.D. 15-25 (late in this year) for Pilate's tenure over Judea. We would not be highly surprised if future research did not show that Pilate also had high level associates who were responsible for various areas of the province during his rule, but this is not the place to speculate about such associates since we know little or nothing as to what their names might have been, at this point.

DENARIUS

(THE TRIBUTE PENNY - OBVERSE)

Each one of these coins which the author has micrographically examined dates to A.D. 19 (without exception!). The Emperor Tiberius, who ruled when Jesus was crucified, is shown on the front of the coin. The Latin legend should be interpreted: "TIBERIUS CAESAR, AUGUSTUS; AND, SON OF THE DEIFIED AUGUSTUS." The fact that these coins were all struck around A.D. 19 likely indicates that Jesus also was crucified not long afterward, since the new "census" for tax purposes was a burning issue. These coins were probably struck specifically for the census which fell in A. D. 20/21. Interestingly, J.P.C.Kent arrives near the approximate date for the coin (ca.A.D.20) on the basis of style. See his Roman Coins. New York: H.N.Abrams, 1978, Pl. 44, no. 155, and p. 280. Kent suggests that the figure on the reverse of the coin is Ceres.

THE TRIBUTE PENNY - REVERSE

Livia, the mother of Tiberius, or Pax (= the Representation of Peace), is shown on a throne, wearing a thin, diaphanous garment, and holding a branch in her left hand, and a spear, upturned , in her right hand. The full Latin inscription (Pontifex Maximus) should be translated "HIGH PRIEST;" Tiberius received this title in A.D. 15. Livia shared the royal dignity of power with Tiberius until she died in A.D. 29 at 83 years of age.